
Marie Efthymiou. *L'art du livre en Asie centrale de la fin du XVI^e siècle au début du XX^e siècle. Étude des manuscrits coraniques de l'Institut d'Orientalisme Abū Rayḥān Bīrūnī*

Iván Szántó

**Electronic version**

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/abstractairanica/49802>

DOI: 10.4000/abstractairanica.49802

ISBN: 1961-960X

ISSN: 1961-960X

Publisher:

CNRS (UMR 7528 Mondes iraniens et indiens), Éditions de l'IFRI

Electronic reference

Iván Szántó, « Marie Efthymiou. *L'art du livre en Asie centrale de la fin du XVI^e siècle au début du XX^e siècle. Étude des manuscrits coraniques de l'Institut d'Orientalisme Abū Rayḥān Bīrūnī* », *Abstracta Iranica* [Online], Volume 37-38-39 | 2018, document 32, Online since 10 March 2018, connection on 02 October 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/abstractairanica/49802> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/abstractairanica.49802>

This text was automatically generated on 2 October 2020.

Tous droits réservés

Marie Efthymiou. *L'art du livre en Asie centrale de la fin du XVIe siècle au début du XXe siècle. Étude des manuscrits coraniques de l'Institut d'Orientalisme Abū Rayḥān Bīrūnī*

Iván Szántó

REFERENCES

Marie Efthymiou. *L'art du livre en Asie centrale de la fin du XVIe siècle au début du XXe siècle. Étude des manuscrits coraniques de l'Institut d'Orientalisme Abū Rayḥān Bīrūnī*. Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2015, 249 p., 59 ill. ; ISBN: 978-90-04-27894-3 [hardback], 978-90-04-28401-2 [e-book])

- 1 This general survey of Qur'ans is based on material from one collection, the Abū Rayḥān Bīrūnī Institute of Oriental Studies, Tashkent, as the latter is housing the most comprehensive ensemble of Central Asian manuscripts. In geographic terms, the range of volumes under discussion covers an area from Ḥīva to Marv, while the chronology stretches between the beginning of the 17th century and the October revolution. Thus, Efthymiou's work warrants the attention of both those with an interest in the study of Central Asian manuscripts and those who seek information regarding this particular collection. The manuscript heritage of Central Asia has been the subject of a growing number of recent catalogues and monographs, published in the wake of the fall of the Soviet Union, yet this work highlights a field, notably the production of Qur'ans, which after having suffered systematic decimation during the Soviet period, has not yet received the same amount of interest as other genres.

- 2 The two parts of the book discuss manuscripts in a twofold deconstruction; the first one breaks them down into their physical constituents, while the second explores the phases of their production. In her book, Efthymiou challenges several axiomatised assumptions that are inherited from Soviet scholarship. One of these assumptions distinguishes between good quality silk paper, attributed to Samarqand and Ḥūqand, and inferior mulberry paper, assigned to provincial mills. As the author points out on the basis of chemical analysis, such distinction cannot be made, for in Ḥūqand most paper appears to have been made of rags, while in Samarqand locally available hemp fibre may have been the principal source for paper manufacture. Gradually both were replaced by imported papers from Russia. The results of chemical investigations regarding inks, gold, bindings, etc., are also discussed in the book. With respect to the formats of Central Asian Qur'an manuscripts, the author emphasizes their functional diversity, as exemplified by small talismanic codices and large volumes intended for *waqf* libraries. Regional characteristics, including the predominance of quaternion binding (gatherings made of four folded sheets), a clearly recognisable variant of *nashī* script, the wide use of colophons – often bilingual Persian and Turkish texts –, are taken into consideration as well. An interesting suggestion is made regarding the continuity of Timurid practices of illumination and the close parallels of the latter with Indian techniques; this suggestion is substantiated by pointing out the Central Asian origins of the Mughal state. In general, a gradual strengthening of Indian-inspired elements is observed at the expense of Persian features, although the latter remain present, too. A notable local peculiarity is the exceptionally large number of signed bindings datable between the mid-18th century and the early Soviet period. The *ṣaḥḥāf*s, or binders, often bore the title *mullā*. This, on the one hand, situates their craft within the religious hierarchy, yet, on the other hand, the growing emphasis on names and signatures point to a certain democratisation of book production. Such tendencies, however, did not save it from extinction during the Soviet period when oral transmission once again became the principal means of religious learning.

AUTHORS

IVÁN SZÁNTÓ

Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest & Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienne